



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Billings Field Office
5001 Southgate Drive, PO Box 36800
Billings, Montana 59107-6800



IN REPLY TO:
4700

April 10, 2004

Dear Interested Party:

The Billings Field Office (BiFO) has developed an Environmental Assessment (MT-010-04-18) outlining relevant information about the Pryor Mountain wild horse herd and presenting alternatives for continuing research with fertility control on wild horse mares. This EA also addresses the justification, methods and procedures to be used in implementing this action, and addresses the environmental impacts of such action on the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range (PMWHR). The EA is available by contacting BiFO or at <http://www.mt.blm.gov/bifo/whb/doc2.html>.

The BLM continues to support and pursue research within the Wild Horse and Burro Program. A final draft of Wild Horse and Burro Strategic Research Plan was reviewed and supported by the National Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Board in August 2002, and the BLM Director's Science Advisory Board in January 2003. Within this strategy, continuing research on fertility control has been identified as a high priority.

The initiation of fertility control treatment of mares in the Pryors began with the 2001 gather. During this activity 5 yearlings and 1 two-year old female received a single-dose (primer) of PZP contraceptive vaccine. The intent was to prepare these mares to receive a single booster of PZP vaccine, allowing one year of infertility and an opportunity to fully mature before becoming pregnant. Additional fertility control, under the national field trial research protocol, occurred in the summer of 2002. Participation was assessed and determined by EA# MT-010-02-22 and a Decision Record dated June 14, 2002. The BLM continued with research-based fertility control efforts on the PMWHR in 2003 under EA# MT-010-03-14 and a Decision Record signed June 19, 2003.

The BLM is required to prepare a separate EA for public review and comments prior to proceeding with fertility control on additional mares. **Public comments to the EA, must be submitted in writing, contain original signatures and be postmarked by May 10, 2004 which allows for a 30-day comment period.** The proposed fertility control implementation is scheduled to begin no earlier than July 1, 2004 and will continue until all mares have received a booster vaccine conferring one year of infertility.

Thank you for your interest in the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range. We appreciate your input into the decision-making process and look forward to receiving your comments. If you have questions concerning this EA, please contact Linda Coates-Markle, State Wild Horse and Burro Specialist at (406) 896-5013.

Sincerely,

Sandra S. Brooks
Field Manager